# the oxford grape

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## OXFORD HOUSE -- IT WORKS IN WILMINGTON

Oxford House- Wilmington is off to a flying start. Gilbert Collyer, House President, wrote the following letter to the Board:

" We continue to be "amazed and delighted" with our progress here in Wilmington--and I wanted to write and fill you in on some of the details.

We have a full house and a waiting list. There is a need in the community for another Oxford House operating similar to this one. And in addition some method of handling the Welfare client. With respect to the latter in the State of Delaware the situation is deplorable. He receives $50 a month cash benefits plus Food Stamps under the Federal Program.

We set $30 a week as our contribution toward room and board. Out of this, the House buys all the staple food items which has been averaging about about $40 per week, so the residents need only to buy luncheon meats and their dinner meats and vegetables (we are supplying everything else).

There is never any hassle in the kitchen. There is never any question as to "whose food is whose." We have two large refrigerators and, of course, we have that huge kitchen. Incidentally, our beautiful dining room has never been used -- only for our weekly meetings!! Most people prefer to eat in the kitchen.

Absolutely everything has been donated by the community from various sources. In the beginning, a lot of leg work was needed to acquire beds and mattresses. Now we have an excess of seven beds and six good mattresses in the cellar. We also have two additional sofas in the cellar. Our needs have been more than completely met in every department. The only thing the House has purchased was sheets and towels ( and even those eventually came along to us).

The first month was pretty rough-- we had a complete turnover in personnel--but we are now and have been for about five weeks, stabilized with eleven residents. We had a problem with one resident last weekend which the group handled and we had to ask him to leave. That's the first time since the first week in October that we have faced this problem -- and it is bound to come up periodically.

## OXFORD HOUSE GETS NATIONWIDE PUBLICITY

OXFORD HOUSE SHOULD GEAR FOR AS MANY AS SEVERAL HUNDRED INQUIRIES AS A RESULT OF NATIONWIDE PUBLICITY IN DECEMBER IN THE "NIAAA INFORMATION & FEATURE SERVICE."

THE "NUTS AND BOLTS" ARTICLE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF OXFORD HOUSE (REPRINTED HERE) APPEARED IN THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ALCOHOL ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM, AN AGENCY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE.

THE JOURNAL HAS A CIRCULATION OF 50,000, MANY OF WHOM ARE PROFESSIONALS IN THE ALCOHOLISM FIELD.

THE AUTHOR OF THE ARTICLE, KRISTIE BROWN, SAID MANY OF THE ARTICLES IN THE JOURNAL DRAW SEVERAL HUNDRED REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

THE ARTICLE WAS ESPECIALLY WELCOMED BECAUSE:

--IT WAS PRINTED JUST AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF OXFORD HOUSE-WILMINGTON, DETAILING HOW WELL THE HOUSE THERE IS FUNCTIONING;

--IT IS IN A PUBLICATION THAT IS READ BY THOSE IN A POSITION TO START AN OXFORD HOUSE.

OXFORD HOUSE HAS DISCOURAGED PUBLICITY, EXCEPT IN A CASE SUCH AS THIS WHERE PUBLICITY COULD LEAD TO EXPANSION.

(from page 1)

It is a happy house. Everybody pitches in--you can seldom find a dirty dish left in the kitchen--and that's a pretty good criteria. Everybody has such pride in this house--and you wouldn't believe the beautiful furnishings that have been donated. If a better sofa comes in, or a more comfortable chair, we put the old one down in the basement for the next house -- and we have enough on hand to start another house. (We are only a little over two months old -- so the whole business is nothing short of a miracle.)

We have our second house picked out--just two blocks away on the same street--and have some A.A. people in real estate making inquires about it. Some thought we might be attempting to move too fast and we took a good look at ourselves in this respect. But if the demand is there ( and it certainly is-- we turn applicants away almost daily), we should take a serious look at the situation.

I had personally hoped in the beginning that we could hold off until Spring, when the heat and light bills might be somewhat lower. It's very debatable. The State Hospital has bought our concept, lock , stock and barrel-- I mean the advance programs over and above the Detox facility. Most of our referrals come from them. I doubt that we will ever lack for candidates--if we can continue to show the stability we have been blessed with over the past month or so. No time at all really. It does prve that the concept works. Little in this (Delaware) area has been working. Two half-way houses, down-state are closing the first of the year.

We do not consider an applicant unless he has completed at least two weeks of another program in residence.

Jack P. has been a God-send, particularly to me with some of the heartaches in the beginning stages-- I am so thankful to see him walk through that door almost every weekend!

I hope you will be able to visit us soon to see for yourself. Forgive my overenthusiasm--but it is wonderful to have visitors. The Oxford House guidelines do work! The only time we have difficulties is when we are not adhereing to the guidelines-- and that is simply the truth. I have found from my own experience with the Twelve Steps in A.A. a similar experience. Here we don't push A.A., but almost everybody goes because it wears off by "osmosis" and the good residents don't want to

(see page 3)

## SILVER SPRING HOUSE RAISES RENT TO $35

Oxford House-Silver Spring, faced with inflation and heavy repair expenses, voted to increase weekly rent from $30 to $35. The $30 rate had been in effect since the House opened in October 1975.

Ed Case, President of the House, stated that "the rent increase was necessary in order to keep the House on a break-even basis."

A furnance pump had cost the House nearly $200; tree removal $65; drain repair over $100 and a new toilet about $40. These expenses had all hit over the last few months and the $30 rent was so close to operating expenses that the repairs "broke the bank".

Case also noted that "the books of the House had never really recoved from carrying some deadbeats too long before they were kicked out for non-payment of rent". Case added that the Oxford House idea of charging just enough rent to meet expenses was good only if everybody paid on time.

The new rent will give the House the cushion it needs to meet rising expenses. The three other Maryland Houses continue to charge $30 a week. No one knew how long that low an amount would last.

(from page 2)
feel left out of it, if you know what I mean.

There is so much I could write about but I am hopint you all will be able to visit soon.

I really started to write to you to request our tax exemption number.

Hope to see you soon.

With warmest regards,
(signed)
Gilbert E. Collyer,
President

## AN EDITORIAL
## PROBATION, OR LICENSE TO DRINK?

Probation.

Is it the one final drinking experiment needed by someone in Oxford House to convince him that the fun is gone from drinking--a lapse before he digs his feet in and wholeheartedly embraces AA?

Or, is probation a device for someone to fashion games--to nip along until caught with the idea of quitting at that time?

When Oxford House began in October 1975, the rules of halfway houses (one drink and you're out) seemed too harsh and inflexible. We felt that if any of us had lived at the house for a while and shown a genuine interest in sobriety, we should be allowed "one bite of the apple." We should be welcomed back to the house with the admonition that one more "slip and we're out.

Experience has shown that the policy of probation is, at best, a flop.

From the beginning we discovered that those granted probation most often weren't ready to quit drinking. Once on probation, there were long periods of absence from the house while the drinking continued.

We often faced the dilemma of having applicants ready to move in and give sobriety a shot, yet we couldn't find the person on probation. We didn't know where he was and his belongings were taking up the space of someone who wanted to stay sober.

We also found that those on probation weren't terribly eager to pay rent on time and we had to "eat" their rent payments.

The Washington House and several others have decided to abolish probation. In Washington, anyone who drinks is automatically out, and can't reapply for 60 days.

"We don't want to be in the position of being an enabler," said Bill West. "We feel if a person is going to drink, he should be made to pay the consequences."

Though that sounds tough, experience indicates it is probably the best policy. Too many times probation has been abused by those just resting up between drunks. In short, probation just hasn't worked.

Automatically ejecting anyone drinking or taking pills creates a needed consistency and certainty. It also removes the attitude: "I can get drunk once and maybe I won't get caught, and if I do get caught, nothing will happen anyway."

Many feel that being allowed one drinking spree just adds unneeded pressure--that a virtual freedom to get drunk once is the sort of temptation a recovering alcoholic doesn't need.

## WASHINGTON HOUSE RUNS LIKE WELL-OILED ROLLS

The transfer of Oxford House-Washington from 4015 Fessenden to 3708 Huntington shows the importance to Oxford House of leasing large houses in excellent condition.

Oxford House-Washington opened on Fessenden Street in May of 1976. That house was marginal, being hot in the summer, cold in the winter, and looking dirty right after it was cleaned. The rooms were cramped.

During the year in that location there were often vacancies and there was a push each month to pay the bills. No one seemed too eager to show the house off.

The house has been running like a well-oiled Rolls Royce since the transfer to Huntington in May 1977. The three-story brick house easily accommodates 11 and has been full since the first week with a large backlog of applicants.

Though it strained the budget, the house was able to kick in over $600 to help establish a sister house in Chevy Chase.

Andy Anderson will finish his term as president in early January.

The lease is for two years at $880 per month through May 1978, and $930 per month thereafter. Because of high rents, both Washington houses set the weekly rental at $35.

R.I.P.

TIGGER

Born: June 17, 1976
Died: September, 1977
A typical yellow tomcat.
Survived by many sons
and daughters and,
perhaps, grandchildren.

## WASHINGTON HOUSE FUNDS CHEVY CHASE

The opening of Oxford House-Chevy Chase on December 1 was in the best Oxford House tradition of one house helping another get started--even when it hurts.

The Washington House, itself the recipient of over $1,200 when it opened in May 1976, had already contributed $600 toward the opening of the House in the Park, and lesser sums to the Four Corners and Thayer Houses. Last month they dug into their pockets again and contributed over $600 to pay the first month's rent for Oxford House-Chevy Chase.

They also lined up and hauled the first loads of furniture.

The Chevy Chase House, which is in good condition and at least as large as the Washington House, was leased for two years at $800 per month, with the assistance of Joe C., a real estate agent in the AA fellowship.

It has seven bedrooms and can comfortably accommodate 13. As of December 17, the house had eight residents, though it had little furniture and needed at least four single beds.

The house is two short blocks from Chevy Chase Circle, near the Safeway, bank, library, and other shops.

Buddy was elected president.

# Alcoholic Persons Living Together Aids Recovery

Finding a suitable place to like a detoxification unit, rehabilitation center, or halfway house. They want no more of institutional living, but they may not be ready yet to make it on their own.
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One solution is to live together with other recovering alcoholics in a mutually supportive, noninstitutional setting. This is the concept of Oxford House, which was started by six recovering alcoholics in 1975 in a large rented house in Silver Spring, Md., a suburb of Washington, D.C.

Since then, Oxford House has been incorporated as a nonprofit organization and the concept extended to the operation of seven additional houses for recovering alcoholics. Most are in Silver Spring, but one is in Washington and another in Wilmington, Del., all chartered by the corporation.

An average of 14–15 persons occupy each house. The monthly rents paid by each, resident are calculated to cover all expenses of each house, including utilities and some meals.

An integral part of the Oxford House concept is that residents should be allowed to stay as long as they want to and that the capacity should be expanded to accommodate newcomers. Thus, as the beds fill up in one house, if a waiting list of would-be residents develops, some of the charter members of that house may volunteer to move out and establish a new Oxford House.

In each Oxford House, explains board of directors member J. Paul Molloy, recovering alcoholics "assume full responsibility for their own housing. The houses provide a stable, democratically operated and supportive environment for living in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. They are loosely tied together as part of the corporation, but each house is autonomous except in matters affecting other houses or the corporation."

The rules of the houses are few—the main one being "don't drink." A resident found drinking, either on or off the premises, is asked to move out. Disruptive behavior or nonpayment of rent are the only other reasons for ousting residents.

Institutional features are studiously avoided. There are no clean-up details, curfews, or counselors. And, although most residents participate in AA, they are not required to.

Residents who leave Oxford House and maintain their sobriety are encouraged to become "associate members" and continue to visit one of the houses to offer support to, and provide a role model for, newer members.

House residents come from a wide variety of backgrounds. They range from lawyers and other professionals to persons on welfare, and in age from late teens to the retirement years. Most are employed.

About half of the residents of the first few houses are known to be maintaining sobriety, according to Mr. Molloy.

For a booklet containing more details about Oxford House, write John V. O'Neill, President, Oxford House, Inc., 1219 Fidler Lane, Silver Spring, Md. 20910.

*One of eight Oxford Houses, where recovering alcoholic persons live in a supportive environment. This house is in Washington, D.C.*



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OXFORD HOUSE -- FOUR CORNERS....

Oxford House Four Corners pushed forward in its efforts to bring additional improvements to its House. President Richard Donaldson noted that several loads of stone had been spread in the rear parking area and that additional painting was underway. The Four Corners lease provides that half of the security deposit is returned to the House when a number of property improvements have been made by the members of the House.

OXFORD HOUSE --THAYER....

Progress is ever present in the relatively new Oxford House for Women at Thayer. In downtown Silver Spring the House is convenient to stores, banks, movies and transportation. Oxford House Thayer was the first House to get the Christmas Spirit-- tree and all.

OXFORD HOUSE --"In-The-Park" ....

Last week saw Oxford House--"In-The-Park" pass its first birthday. A year ago few thought that women in the Oxford House System would last. Bonnie and Barbara among others prove the opposite is true.

# THE GRAPE

The Oxford Grape will be published periodically by the staff of Oxford House Inc.

In future months, a designated correspondent at each house will be asked to submit newsworthy articles for publication.

Any correspondence should be addressed to Oxford House Inc., c/o J. Paul Molloy, 9314 Colesville Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20901.

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